

Message Text

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SUBJECT : LAND REFORM IN SONORA; DEVELOPMENTS AT
SAN IGNACIO, RIO MUERTO, SONORA

SUMMARY: FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE OCTOBER 1975, WHEN SONORA GOVERNOR CARLOS ARMANDO BIEBRICH WAS SUMMARILY REMOVED FROM OFFICE FOLLOWING THE KILLING OF CAMPESINO INVADERS AT SAN IGNACIO, RIO MUERTO, SONORA, THE STATE GOVERNMENT IS TALKING BACK TO CONTINUED DEMANDS OF CAMPESINOS, EJIDATARIOS, AND THEIR LEADERSHIP. GOVERNOR CARRILLO MARCOR ADDRESSED THREE HUNDRED EJIDATARIOS FROM SAN IGNACIO IN THE SHARPEST TONE HEARD FROM THIS OLD CHAMPION OF "AGRARIAN REFORM" WHEN THEY DEMANDED, MARCH 7, THE RETURN OF TWO OF THEIR LEADERS WHO RECENTLY DISAPPEARED AND ARE BELIEVED UNDER ARREST AND INVESTIGATION ON VARIOUS CHARGES INCLUDING RAPE OF A MINOR FEMALE. CARRILLO MARCOR, FOR THE FIRST TIME SHOWING IMPATIENCE WITH THE COMPLAINTS AND DEMANDS OF THE EJIDATARIOS, TOLD THEM IT WAS NOW TIME TO WORK AND NOT TO CONTINUE TO CREATE PROBLEMS: HE REMINDED THEM THAT MANY OF THEM WERE NOT EVEN FROM SONORA, BUT FROM SINALOA, AND THAT NUMEROUS SONORANS HAD BEEN DISPOSSESSED TO GIVE THEM THE LANDS OF THEIR NEW EJIDO; AND HE DENIED CHARGES THAT STATE

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OFFICIALS WERE NOT INFORMING HIM OF THE TRUE SITUATION IN THE SAN IGNACIO AREA. AS A CONCILIATORY GESTURE AT THE CONCLUSION OF A STORMY SESSION, HOWEVER, CARRILLO MARCOR ALLOWED THE EJIDATARIOS TO REMAIN IN "OCCUPATION" OF THE PLAZA ZARAGOZA IN FRONT OF THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE AND ONE BLOCK FROM CONGEN. THE PRESS REPORTS THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE EJIDATARIOS ARE CARRYING PISTOLS. END SUMMARY

1. THE "MASSACRE AT RIO MUERTO" OF OCTOBER 25, 1975, WHICH LED TO THE NOVEMBER 1975 CONFISCATION OF OVER FOUR THOUSAND HECTARES HITHERTO OWNED BY SOME EIGHTY SMALL PROPERTY OWNERS, MARKED THE BEGINNING OF ONE OF THE LONGEST YEARS IN THE VIOLENCE PRONE PROCESS OF "AGRARIAN REFORM" IN SONORA. OVERRULING "AMPAROS" OR COURT WRITS, DISREGARDING EVIDENCE ADVANCED BY THE PREVIOUS OWNERS THAT THEIR TITLES WERE LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONALLY CORRECT, PRESIDENT ECHEVERRIA AND HIS AGRARIAN REFORM SECRETARY BARRA GARCIA TREATED THE PRIVATE FARMERS OF SONORA AS THE LAST BASTION OF REACTION TO PROGRESS AND JUSTICE. ON NOVEMBER 19, 1976, ELEVEN DAYS BEFORE THE END OF ECHEVERRIA'S PRESIDENTIAL TERM, BRIGADES OF SUVERYORS FROM THE AGRARIAN REFORM SECRETARIAT FLEW INTO SOUTHERN SONORA IN THE NIGHT TO "EXECUTE" CONFISCATION DECREES SIGNED BY THE PRESIDENT, BUT NOT YET PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE, WHICH GAVE NEARLY 100,000 OF THE BEST IRRIGATED LANDS IN NORTHWEST MEXICO TO SOME EIGHT THOUSAND CAMPESINO CLAIMANTS.

2. THE MASSIVE IMPACT OF THE NOVEMBER 1976 LAND CONFISCATIONS HAS NOT COMPLETELY OVERSHADOWED WHAT HAPPENED IN SAN IGNACIO, RIO MUERTO ONE YEAR EARLIER, WHERE ECHEVERRIA'S HAND PICKED INTERIM GOVERNOR, CARRILLO MARCOR, TOLD THE CAMPESINOS THAT THEY WERE BEING GIVEN THE LANDS OF SAN IGNACIO, RIO MUERTO AS PAYMENT FOR THE BLOOD OF THEIR MARTYRS. WHAT THE NEWLY ARRIVED GOVERNOR DID NOT MENTION, AND MAY NOT HAVE KNOWN, WAS THAT THE BULK OF THE NEW EJIDATARIOS AT SAN IGNACIO WERE NOT SONORAN "WORKERS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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SOIL," BUT PEOPLE FROM SINALOA AND OTHER PARTS OF MEXICO WHO HAD BEEN HAULED TO SONORA BY THE CAMPESINO ORGANIZATIONS OF THE PACTO DE OCAMPO, NOTABLY BY CELESTINO SALCEDO MONTEON. THEY CAME TO SONORA HEAVILY ARMED, AND NOT CONTENT TO OCCUPY THE LANDS AWARDED THEM BY PRESIDENTIAL DECREE, THEY ALSO SEIZED ADJOINING LANDS THAT HAD NOT BEEN CONFISCATED. CONTRARY TO EARLIER PRACTICE, THE NEWLY ENDOWED EJIDATARIOS KEPT THE CROPS STILL ON THE GROUND, AND OF THE FARMS BUILDINGS AND MACHINERY OF THE PREVIOUS OWNERS. NOW, MORE THAN FIFTEEN MONTHS AFTER THEY "INVADED" LANDS THAT HAD NOT BEEN AFFECTED BY THE PRESIDENTIAL DECREES, THEY ARE STILL OCCUPIING THESE LANDS WHICH INCLUDE 300 HECTARES BELONGING TO DESCENDENTS OF PRESIDENT PLUTARCO ELIAS CALLES.

3. UNVERIFIED REPORTS HAVE REACHED US OF PROBLEMS AT SAN IGNACIO, RIO MUERTO. THESE INCLUDED CONFLICTS BETWEEN RIVAL EJIDATARIO LEADERS AND THEIR FOLLOWERS, AND BETWEEN EJIDATARIOS AND THE FARM WORKERS OF THE FORMER OWNERS. TWO HUNDRED OF THE LATTER HAVE LOST THEIR JOBS AND HOMES.

THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF IMPROPER HANDLING OF FUNDS. THERE ARE RUMORS THAT THE EJIDO LEADERS HAVE BEEN STOCK-PILING ARMS AND THAT INCIDENTS INVOLVING BLOODSHED HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE RECENT PAST. THE EJIDATARIOS NOW IN FRONT OF THE GOVERNOR'S PALACE DEMAND THE RETURN OF TWO OF THEIR LEADERS, URBANO TERAN ENRIQUEZ AND ALEJO CARDENAS, WHO ARE REPORTEDLY UNDER ARREST BY THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL POLICE FOR CONTRABAND OF ARMS. (THIS IS BORNE OUT BY THE FACT THAT EARLY LAST WEEK THE FEDERAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY, CHIEF OF THE FEDERAL JUDICIAL POLICE, AND CHIEF OF THE CUTO RPT CUSTOMS POLICE, ALL OF HERMOSILLOA, WERE IN THE CIUDAD OBREGON AREA ON OFFICIAL BUSINESS.)

4. A FEW DAYS AGO, A MEMBER OF THE ELIAS CALLES FAMILY TOLD THE UNDERSIGNED THAT THE SITUATION IN SAN IGNACIO WAS EXTREMELY TENSE. THE FEW PRIVATE FARMERS WHO STILL HAVE LAND IN THE REGION ARE AFRAID TO ENTER THERE, DESPITE THE ALMOST CONFIDENTIAL

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CONSTANT PRESENCE OF JUDICIAL POLICE. OUR VISITOR STATED THAT THE PRIVATE FARMERS ARE NOW ONLY SEEKING SOME FORM OF COMPENSATION FOR THEIR LOST PROPERTIES; THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT PRIVATE ENTERPRISE CAN COEXIST SIDE BY SIDE WITH EJIDATARIOS WHO FOLLOW SUCH RADICAL LEADERS AS THOSE OF SAN IGNACIO.

5. GOVERNOR CARRILLO MARCOR, WHO HAS PROVED FAIRLY ADEPT AT CARRYING WATER ON BOTH SHOULDERS, DID SO AGAIN WHEN HE "SCOLDED" THE VISITING EJIDATARIOS. INSTEAD OF SENDING THEM HOME AND BACK TO WORK, HE GRANTED THEIR DEMAND THAT THEY BE ALLOWED TO "CAMP" ON THE PLAZA "UNTIL THE RETURN OF THEIR MISSING LEADERS." AS THE GOVERNOR DID SO, HE REPEATEDLY PROFESSED HIS "AGRARIAN REFORMER" CONVICTIONS. SACKSTEDER

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